

APR 18 1937

Industrial Unions Mean Unity

Our Answer to President Green



LABOR'S SEVEN LEAGUE BOOTS

Committee for Industrial Organization
Washington, D. C.

COMMITTEE FOR INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION

OFFICERS

JOHN L. LEWIS, Chairman
CHARLES P. HOWARD, Secretary
JOHN BROPHY, Director

COMMITTEE

JOHN L. LEWIS, President
United Mine Workers of America
CHARLES P. HOWARD, President
International Typographical Union
SIDNEY HILLMAN, President
Amalgamated Clothing Workers
of America
DAVID DUBINSKY, President
International Ladies' Garment
Workers' Union
THOMAS F. McMAHON, President
United Textile Workers of America
HARVEY C. FREMMING, President
Oil Field, Gas Well and Refinery
Workers of America
M. ZARITSKY, President
Cap and Millinery Department,
United Hatters, Cap and Mil-
linery Workers' International
Union
THOMAS H. BROWN, President
International Union of Mine, Mill
and Smelter Workers

Address Inquiries or Orders to
Committee for Industrial Organization
Room 45, 1001 15th St. N. W.
Washington, D. C.

Publication No. 8.

Prices, postage included: Single copies, 10c; 5 for 25c; 12 for 50c;
100 for \$3.50; 500 for \$15.00. Please send money with order.

413168

CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	5
The Case for Industrial Unionism by William Green	9
Letter of William Green to Members of the C. I. O.	10
Answers to President Green	
By Charles P. Howard	12
By Harvey C. Fremming	14
By Thomas F. MacMahon	16
By M. Zaritsky	17
By the General Executive Board of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers.	19
By the General Executive Board of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union	21
By John L. Lewis	22

INTRODUCTION

THE purpose of the Committee for Industrial Organization is to bring the unorganized into the American Federation of Labor. It aims to do this by carrying on education within the Federation for industrial unionism, in order to win over a majority, and by giving advice and help to groups of newly-organized workers in the mass production industries.

Some of the craft union leaders, who themselves have far from a notable record of growth, have taken wild alarm at the formation of this Committee. They are using the old trick of shouting "splitters" and "dualism" instead of squarely facing the issue: how can the unorganized be brought into the American Federation of Labor? Even President Green of the A. F. of L. has permitted himself to be drawn into this misleading attack. His letter to the heads of the international unions who make up the C. I. O. is remarkable because it completely ignores the main problem of increasing labor's strength.

Mr. Green's stand is all the more remarkable because many of the workers in autos, rubber, and other industries learned their lesson in industrial unionism from him when he was active in the United Mine Workers. It is puzzling to them, and no doubt embarrassing to Mr. Green, when he now shakes his head at the very words they used to hear from his lips. So effective was Mr. Green's statement for industrial unionism published in 1918 that we are reprinting it here. It states the position of the C. I. O. very well, except that Mr. Green goes further. He argues for industrial unionism in the railroad, printing and other industries where councils and federated bodies exist; the C. I. O. is not attempting to bring about change in such industries where the craft unions are already established.

It is vital that the members of unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor see what the real issue is, and that is why Mr. Green's letter together with the answers of the members of the C. I. O. are reprinted here, with the addition of Mr. Green's excellent article. It seemed best to omit portions of the letters in order to avoid repetition and to insure that all would receive the readers' attention.

These letters show how empty are Mr. Green's fears, and how false the hue and cry some of the crafts are attempting to raise. Mr. Green has tried more recently in another way to avoid the issue by making it seem that the American Federation of Labor is, under its present policy, organizing the unorganized. He issued a

press statement, quoted in the A. F. of L. Weekly News Service, saying that "during the past two years the A. F. of L. has created 1,804 federal labor unions." He is seemingly talking of a different period than that covered by the Executive Council Reports for 1934 and 1935. These reports give a total of 416 charters issued to federal labor unions during the two years, with 1196 more to local trade unions. The Executive Council Reports show that while there was a net gain in the federal labor unions of 342 in the 1933-34 period, there was a net loss of 110 in 1934-35, through disbanding or suspension. The local trade unions suffered a similar net loss of 204. A loss of one-quarter to one-third of the gains of the year before, which these locals suffered, is hardly something with which to be content. As these figures show, there was a reversal of policy and trend in 1934, and it is the situation thus created that made the formation of the Committee for Industrial Organization essential.

If any one doubts the seriousness of the problem facing these new unions in the mass production industries, let him read the proceedings of the last day of the 1935 A. F. of L. convention. Every delegate who spoke for the new unions in these industries told the same story of the demand of the workers for industrial unionism, and of difficulties resulting from the objections of the craft unions.

This same story is repeated daily in the hundreds of letters that pour into the office of the Committee for Industrial Organization. We have received official resolutions on the matter from many steel locals affiliated with the American Federation of Labor in five different states, from a large part of the membership of the United Auto Workers, A. F. of L. affiliate, and from many locals in rubber, gas and coke, cement, aluminum, electrical manufacturing, radio, and other industries in all parts of the country. Many central labor bodies have likewise endorsed our stand. The workers in the mass production industries want unionism—but they do not want to be divided up into dozens of crafts. The convention of the A. F. of L. instructed the Executive Council to proceed with organizing campaigns in steel, autos, and other industries. Past experience shows that these industries cannot be organized successfully on a craft union basis. But we believe that it can be done on the basis of industrial unionism, the kind of organization the workers want. The Executive Council will have the wholehearted cooperation of the Committee for Industrial Organization in such endeavors.

Mr. Green in his letter raises a point about democracy but in doing so himself takes a stand that is entirely undemocratic. Mr.

Howard's letter, as well as some of the others, makes this point very clear. There are, indeed, adequate precedents, if that were necessary, for the formation of the C. I. O. within the framework of the A. F. of L. The Conference for Progressive Political Action, mentioned by Mr. Zaritsky, finally won over the Executive Council to its candidate and platform, and it was not branded as dual even though it included unions and other organizations outside the American Federation of Labor, which our Committee does not. The Railway Labor Executives Association is today not subjected to this smoke-screen of "dualism" even though it includes unions not in the A. F. of L. that have jurisdictional conflicts with affiliated unions. It has moreover taken the lead in advocating certain policies, such as the six-hour day and public ownership of the railroads, later accepted by the A. F. of L. in convention. We raise these examples not because we are critical of such organizations but, on the contrary, because we believe we have an equal right to existence and to fair play, and that we are of equal value to the whole labor movement.

Now that the cries of dualism are being hurled, it may be well to examine this oft-used term of opprobrium. Dualism involves attempting to break up and replace an existing organization, and is accompanied by efforts to take away members. There is no resemblance between this and what the Committee for Industrial Organization is doing. Our aim is to strengthen, not to break up, the American Federation of Labor. We are seeking to bring in outside groups, not to take away members. Nor do we wish to harm the legitimate aims of a single craft union. Our objection is to paper jurisdictional claims among hitherto unorganized workers, with the resulting confusion and division.

Under certain conditions, workers naturally turn to organization. If existing labor organizations do not meet their needs, they turn to some new form. When craft unions claim jurisdiction over certain types of workers but do not admit them to full and equal membership, they should not be surprised if the workers form an independent union of their own. The history of the labor movement shows this is the inevitable outcome. Nor should they be surprised when conflicting craft claims, or craft claims that mean division of the workers into dozens of groups, similarly lead to organizations outside the A. F. of L. In such cases, the craft unions involved are responsible for the resulting dualism, whether it takes the form of company unions or independent organizations. And the A. F. of L. is responsible where its policy fosters such a condition. Even now Federal locals that would like to stay in the A. F. of L. are

on the point of being driven outside because they are not given the right to the jurisdiction and self-government that will enable them to extend their organization.

Past experience shows that where an established union is really willing to take care of the needs of an independent union group, such groups are ready and eager to come into the A. F. of L. organizations. The United Textile Workers, for example, by intelligent action, was able to absorb the hitherto independent unions in hosiery and silk. The Committee for Industrial Organization is seeking to remove the roots of dualism in the movement by urging the organization of the unorganized. It is attempting to bring about the end of dualism, whether in company unions or independent organizations, by furthering a policy within the American Federation of Labor that will enable the workers to enter on the only basis millions of them will accept—industrial unionism.

No one who wants to see these unorganized millions brought into the A. F. of L. has any reason to be alarmed at the activities of the Committee for Industrial Organization. The official organs of certain craft unions have seen fit to misrepresent the purpose of the C. I. O. by making it seem that we are working for industrial unionism in those industries where the crafts are established. It is to be hoped that the members of these organizations will read our statements for themselves to learn the truth. We want the cooperation of all workers in building a powerful and united labor movement.

JOHN BROPHY, Director,
January 2, 1936.

The Case for Industrial Unionism

By WILLIAM GREEN

AN industrial form of organization is the organization of all men employed in an industry into one compact union. Craft unionism means the organization of men employed in their respective crafts, resulting in numerous organizations within a particular industry.

The organization of men by industry rather than by crafts brings about a more perfect organization, closer cooperation, and tends to develop the highest form of organization. The causes of jurisdictional disputes are considerably decreased and in many industries can be eliminated altogether. The constant friction resulting among craft organizations in their contention for jurisdiction causes the labor movement more trouble and greater inconvenience than any other problem with which it has to deal. When men are organized by industry they can concentrate their economic power more advantageously than when organized into craft unions. The results of such concentration of economic strength are the promotion of their common welfare and the advancement of their common interests.

The United Mine Workers of America is an industrial organization. All men employed in and around the coal mines, regardless of their skill or calling, belong to the United Mine Workers of America. In negotiating a wage scale between the coal operators and coal miners, a schedule of wages is arranged governing all classes of labor, skilled and unskilled, employed in and around the coal mines. By this process the interest of the unskilled worker is given as much attention as that of the skilled worker. It is indeed, in the fullest sense, a policy of all for each and each for all. A settlement of the wage scale is not finally reached until the schedules applying to all classes of labor employed in and around the mines are agreed to.

The advantage of such a form of organization is so obvious that one can scarcely conceive of any opposition thereto. A form of organization that protects the interests of the unskilled worker is the form of organization most desirable. Much complaint has been directed against craft organizations because little regard has been given to the problems of the unskilled workers. It is becoming more and more evident that if unskilled workers are forced to work long hours and for low wages, the interests and welfare of the skilled worker are constantly menaced thereby.

In the development of industry and organization the tendency is toward concentration and perfection. This applies to the organization of labor as well as to the organization of industry and capital. Hence the reason why organized labor is gradually passing from craft organization to the more effective industrial forms of organization. It may be well-nigh impossible to eliminate the craft form of organization in certain lines of industry. However, it is quite possible to establish industrial forms of organization in the railroad industry, the printing industry, and in other industries where groups of organizations are formed into councils and federated bodies.

Summing up the situation, some of the advantages resulting from an industrial form of organization are the reduction of opportunities or causes for jurisdictional disputes, the concentration of economic strength, the blending into harmonious cooperation of all men employed in industry, and the advancement and protection of the interests of the unskilled laborer in the same proportion as that of the skilled worker.

Reprinted from the "American Labor Year Book" for 1917-18.

LETTER OF
WILLIAM GREEN

President of the American Federation of Labor, to Members of the
Committee for Industrial Organization

November 23, 1935.

I learned through press reports recently of the formation of an organization called the "Committee for Industrial Organization." It was stated therein that representatives of your organization participated in the conference when such an organization was formed and that the international union you represent is to be a component part of it.

Officers of national and international unions would undoubtedly view with feelings of apprehension and deep concern any attempt on the part of a group of local unions to organize within the organization they represent a movement for the avowed purpose of promoting the acceptance or rejection of a principle or a policy which had been considered and decided upon at a convention representative of all the members of said national or international union.

Some officers and members within national and international unions, as well as within the American Federation of Labor, regard separate movements formed within the main organization

structure as dual in character and as decidedly menacing to its success and welfare. When organizations within organizations are formed for the achievement and realization of some declared purpose no one can accurately prophesy or predict where such a movement will lead. It could and may be diverted from its original purpose.

Experience has shown that organizations thus formed are productive of confusion and fraught with serious consequences. A line of cleavage between such a movement and the parent body may be created and the breach between those who sincerely and honestly believe in different forms of organization could be definitely widened. Bitterness and strife would inevitably follow.

It has been the fixed rule, both within the American Federation of Labor and national and international unions affiliated with it, to decide upon organization policies by a majority vote at legally convened conventions.

The widest opportunity must be accorded the officers and delegates who participate in these conventions to present their point of view, to deliberate profoundly and to decide judiciously grave and important questions of organization and administrative policies.

When a decision has thus been rendered it becomes the duty of the officers and members of the American Federation of Labor to comply with it and they should be permitted to do this free from the interference and opposition of those who constitute the minority.

Those who disagree with the action of the majority are accorded the right to urge the acceptance of their point of view at succeeding conventions.

I deem it my official duty, as president of the American Federation of Labor, to express my feelings of apprehension over the grave consequences which might follow from the formation of an organization within the American Federation of Labor, even though it might be claimed that said organization is formed for the achievement of a laudable purpose.

My conscience and my judgment lead me to advise against it and emphasize most vigorously the danger of division and of discord which may follow.

My loyalty and devotion to the principles and ideals of the American Federation of Labor inspire me to transmit this communication to you. I ask you to accept it in the fraternal spirit in which it is sent.

ANSWERS TO PRESIDENT GREEN

FROM REPLY OF

CHARLES P. HOWARD

President, International Typographical Union

... Before making detailed reply to the issues you raise permit me to say I bow to no one in my loyalty to the American Federation of Labor, the organization for which I have the honor to speak, and the welfare of the wage workers of our country. It has been my endeavor to serve their best interests and in this activity I have not departed from that purpose.

However, I would not be frank with you if I failed to say that I consider organization of the unorganized millions of wage workers as being so essential that it overshadows almost every other consideration.

Minority Has Rights

I do not agree with the outline of the rights of a minority, as set forth in your letter. Where the question is one of internal policy a labor organization is no different from any other democratic body. It is not unethical or improper for a minority to endeavor to have its proposals adopted by the majority through proper discussion of the issues and by an effort to convert those whose interests are most affected—the rank and file of the workers.

To confine the effort to conventions of the American Federation of Labor would be to presume that only the officers and delegates are to be considered and that the members of National and International Unions, who support the Federation, as well as the millions of unorganized to whom we would make appeal, should have no direct interest or influence in making the fundamental policies of the American Federation of Labor. My experience does not justify acceptance of such a restriction upon the rights of minorities.

Again I must disagree with your statement that when a decision upon internal policies has been adopted by majority vote in a convention that the rights and privileges of the minority are confined to urging "acceptance of their point of view at succeeding conventions." Such a restriction would prevent minorities from engaging in educational campaigns so essential where the vital interests of millions of workers are involved. The application of such a policy in national and state governmental affairs would estop minorities in Congress and State Legislatures from appealing to the people to have a minority policy adopted—except through changes in official personnel.

Controlling Group Undemocratic

During the years I have been a delegate to conventions of the American Federation of Labor I have observed the strongest cohesion in a controlling group for the purpose of determining every question from election of officers to selection of the city in which the convention is to meet the following year. At times it has been necessary to use official influence to prevent this group from defeating for reelection those who represented a minority opinion.

Much to our regret, some of us have had the conclusion forced upon us that the merits of proposals are not the determining factor in rendering decisions. Proposals having to do with fundamental policies have been adopted or rejected by combination rather than by converting the delegates. It is my earnest belief that a labor organization should be the very last place on this earth where such conditions should be permitted to exist.

No Cause for Alarm

Permit me to call your attention to the declared purposes of the Committee for Industrial Organization:

We propose to "encourage and promote organization of the workers in the mass production and unorganized industries of the nation and affiliation with the American Federation of Labor." That declaration does not include the possibility of dual organization or constitute a menace to the success and welfare of the American Federation of Labor. If the first purpose of the Federation is to organize the unorganized such an activity should cause no apprehension or concern. . . .

It is not the intent, aim or purpose of the Committee for Industrial Organization to "raid" the membership of any established National or International Union.

It is not the intent, aim or purpose to infringe upon the rightful jurisdiction of any chartered National or International Union.

It is not the intent, aim or purpose to attempt to influence any National or International Union to change its form of organization from craft to industrial.

It is not the intent, aim or purpose to use any unethical or coercive method in conducting the educational campaign which has for its purpose organization upon an industrial basis of the millions of workers in mass production industries who have not been and can not be organized upon a craft basis.

It is **not** the intent, aim or purpose to take any action that will invite or promote organization that in any way can be considered dual to the American Federation of Labor. Quite the contrary is true. We seek to alter a policy which now invites such dual organization. . . .

There has been no departure from the organization policies adopted by majority vote in the convention of the American Federation of Labor. There is a difference of opinion as to interpretation and application of the convention's action. Our experience with court decisions has taught us any declared purpose can be defeated by unsympathetic interpretation and administration.

As the author of the report adopted by the San Francisco convention and reaffirmed at Atlantic City, I am in a fair position to know what was intended by some of the proponents of the policy adopted by the convention upon the subject of industrial organization. We had no thought that when charters were granted to the workers in those industries enumerated in the report they would be restricted.

We believe the Executive Council failed to carry out the instructions of the convention. It is the condition thus created which makes necessary some agency within the Federation that has a sympathetic attitude toward organization of the workers in these industries upon the only basis that will be accepted by them or effective for their protection. . . .

FROM REPLY OF

HARVEY C. FREMMING

President, International Association of Oil Field, Gas Well and Refinery Workers

November 27, 1935.

. . . . Let me assure you of the complete loyalty of the International Union of which I am president to the American Federation of Labor. My own personal regard for you and my gratitude to you for the service you have rendered to our Union does not need to be re-stated here. You are aware of it, I am sure. I am sure also that we have the same objective in mind. But we are not in complete accord as to the possibilities of developing an amenable frame of mind in certain quarters in the craft union group.

Working for Growth of A. F. of L.

It is unfortunate, it seems to me, that newspapers, out of their lack of understanding or actuated by the motive to make sensational

news, have created the impression that the dispute is between the American Federation of Labor and the industrial unions. I fear that continued newspaper statements will deepen this impression and thus create greater misunderstanding rather than close it. The dispute, as we see it, insofar as there is a dispute, is between two ideas about policy within the American Federation of Labor and the two groups which disagree as to policy are equally loyal to the American Federation of Labor and equally determined that it shall grow and gain in strength to serve the wage earners. . . .

The unions in our Committee are engaged in mass production industries. We have organized those industries. We have formed industrial unions for the coldly practical reason that no other kind of organization could be effected. It is a factual situation. No dogmatic principle is involved; it is merely a matter of meeting a situation as it must be met.

Cannot Kick Men into Craft Unions

Until these industries were organized as they have been organized, the craft unions were helpless in them. After organization the crafts have come seeking to detach the small groups of mechanics whom they claim as their rightful members. We have been subjected to such efforts time after time. The membership is not consulted. Craft union orders are issued and members are expected to transfer themselves into isolated helplessness. Many times they refuse, even when we, as international officers, agree to transfers. We have held that we cannot and will not force men to become non-unionists, and when they refuse to transfer we allow them to remain in our unions. We can, upon urgency of raiders, kick these loyal members out of our union, but we cannot kick them into a craft union against their will. They will join company unions or communist organizations or embittered, remain outside the union movement. . . .

Incidentally and in that connection, let me call your attention to the fact that the first group action within the Federation was group action by the Metal Trades, pursuant to their agreement in Atlantic City to act and vote as a unit on this question. There the precedent was set if one was needed, and it may well enough be said that our action as a group was made necessary by their action as a group for a single purpose.

Why Not Write Obstructive Craft Minority?

Frankly, craft union raids upon our membership form a very potent reason for our united action. If some way can be found by

you to prevent such raids upon our membership, to bring about a fair understanding and to clear the road for organization work in line with the needs of the situation, then it seems to me no basis for division of opinion will exist and the reason for internal group action will have passed. If we are commonly inspired by a purpose to organize workers and to help them win improvement of their conditions, then we should be able to meet the issues of the hour in unity. Thus far we have encountered only a stubborn refusal to understand that this is 1935 and not 25 years ago. We have hoped that you could bring about modification of that determination to stand in the road and we shall still welcome any such effort.

We realize that our opponent is the great employer, the giant corporation. We have no wish to waste energy in conflict of opinion with our trade union brothers. But if we must first clear the road of stubborn oppositionist tactics within our movement, so that we may fight the giant corporations effectively then we shall have to do it and we shall have to make the best of the situation. . . .

For my part I am sincerely glad that you addressed your letter to me and to the officials of the other unions in our Committee. It offers a first opportunity for a clearing of the air. I should be happy were you to address a similar letter to the officials of the craft minority groups upon whom we place the full and extremely heavy responsibility for forcing us to act as we have acted for the welfare of the movement which we cherish above everything. . . .

FROM REPLY OF

THOMAS F. MacMAHON

President, United Textile Workers

November 26, 1935.

. . . At our International Convention in August, 1934, with the largest number of delegates present in our history, the question of adoption of industrial organization for the United Textile Workers of America in future was discussed for hours, with the result that out of 499 delegates present there were but four against committing the International Union to an industrial form of organization.

The delegates from this International who attended the American Federation of Labor Convention were acting under instructions specifically drawn up by resolution and adopted unanimously at our Convention. We carried out these instructions by our action of voting in favor of the industrial form of organization.

These instructions, we believe, carry with them the continuation of the efforts of the International representatives to bring about inside the American Federation of Labor, and according to its laws, this kind of organization.

Surely, when you mention that the promotion of such a policy would be in any manner, shape or form dual in character, I believe you are going far beyond what the law and practice of the American Federation of Labor has been since its inception. . . .

It is our opinion, gained from personal contact with those who endorse and advocate the industrial form of organization, that their loyalty to, and their desire for, bigger and better organizations inside the American Federation of Labor is paramount to any other thought. We are motivated by that desire, and insofar as the United Textile Workers of America can go, we shall do everything within our power to advance and advocate the industrial form of organization, with no thought, surely, of injury to the present set-up of craft unions inside the American Federation of Labor, but rather one of help.

FROM REPLY OF

M. ZARITSKY

President, Cap and Millinery Dept., United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers' International Union

December 18, 1935.

. . . In no respect, it seems to me, is there anything in the purpose or functions of the Committee which should interfere with, or be antagonistic to, the purposes and functions of the American Federation of Labor.

Committee Has Precedents

Nor is the formation of such committees unprecedented in the history of the American Federation of Labor. I recall the formation of the Conference for Progressive Political Action, the purpose of which was to further the cause of independent political action on the part of labor. Its purpose was to reverse a policy of non-partisan political action which the Federation has traditionally followed. Many unions, including international unions, state federations of labor, and city central bodies, participated in the work of that Conference. At no time was it considered as tending towards dualism, even though the supporters of the Federation's non-partisan policy disapproved of it. Far from causing rifts in the ranks of

labor, that Conference, and the work it performed, contributed materially to a frank and intelligent discussion of a subject that is vital to labor. . . .

If any additional assurance were needed to allay any fear as to the outcome of the Committee's activities, it is to be found in the personnel of the Committee. They are all the heads of responsible organizations affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. Their loyalty to the Federation has never been questioned. . . .

Industrial Form Benefit to Our Union

Our own experience in the headwear industry is a striking illustration of the dangers to which our movement is exposed when several organizations claim or hold jurisdiction in the same field. While these jurisdictional claims occupied our attention many thousands of workers remained unorganized. The evolution of our industry compelled us to recognize that our own methods must be changed if we are not to become impotent as an instrument for the protection of the workers employed in the industry. It was only when this fact was recognized that we were able to sacrifice charter rights and surrender conflicting claims, and begin the work of organization, without regard to jurisdiction. As a result, thousands of new members have been enrolled in our organization. With much of this you, personally, are familiar, because it was largely through your efforts that this result was achieved. . . .

Capital is throwing all restraint to the winds. In the mass production industries, labor is being driven to the wall. Company unions are multiplying. On every side the enemy is pressing forward. While we are debating, precious rights won through generations of effort are being placed in jeopardy, and, in many cases, destroyed. Not only is the drive of organized wealth calculated to prevent the organization of the mass production industries, but every organized industry is menaced by the fight which is being made upon us. The 85 or 90 per cent of the workers who remain unorganized are the potential force that the economic rulers of our nation can use to wreck our movement. We can have no security or safety unless a substantial part of the unorganized are brought into the American Federation of Labor. . . .

In conclusion, may I assure you that I appreciate the fraternal spirit in which your letter is written. . . . With your cooperation we were able to turn two craft unions, fighting for jurisdiction to the detriment of the workers, into one industrial union. . . .

Statement by the GENERAL EXECUTIVE BOARD of the AMALGAMATED CLOTHING WORKERS

December 11, 1935.

In approving the report of the formation and of the activity of the Committee for Industrial Organization the General Executive Board of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America has taken cognizance of the following important factors in the present industrial and labor situation:

The total membership of the trade unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor and of those not in affiliation comprises upward of 5 million out of about 40 million organizable wage earners in the nation's industries and services.

A degree of organization not exceeding 12% cannot be viewed as satisfactory in an industrial and economic setup in which industry is highly organized, well centralized and subject to controls by a powerful leadership.

Mass Production Workers Want Industrial Unions

Existing union organization in the basic industries, with the exception of the coal miners, has hardly penetrated and at best but scratched the surface. There is no question as to what is the primary cause of labor's failure to organize the unorganized millions in such industries as steel, automobile, rubber, radio, oil, electrical supplies and the various services which now engage many millions of working people. It is, that the prevailing craft form of organization has proved unsuitable to the needs of labor in these mass production industries. The trade union movement must not remain unresponsive to the demands coming from labor in the mass production industries for the formation of all-inclusive industrial unions. The Committee for Industrial Organization, consisting of representatives of a number of international unions, both of the craft and industrial types of organization, was formed in response to the above demand. It seeks to meet a new situation with new weapons.

The suitability of existing craft unions in the industries where skilled labor is predominant is not called into question. The paramount task at hand is that of organizing all labor in the mass production industries where an organizing method which separates the workers into craft unions and into unions of semiskilled and unskilled workers has failed to mobilize the power of the workers for effective dealings with corporate control of industry.

Otherwise Labor's Gains Will Be Lost

While in an immediate sense the question of industrial organization is one that primarily concerns the workers in industry, in the last analysis it is an issue of national significance. Labor unorganized, or poorly and ineffectively organized, and consequently incapable of putting up a strong defense of wage standards, is a menace to the major national requirement of our time, that is, the need of the wide spread of purchasing power among the large masses of our people, so that they may purchase and consume the output of national industry. This end can be achieved only by the effective organization of the workers.

However successful the organized minority of labor may be in obtaining what seem to be satisfactory work conditions, the gains made by labor are certain to be lost eventually if the benefits of organization are not rapidly and widely extended to include ever larger numbers. The waging of an active, ever-expanding campaign of organization of the millions of the unorganized is a measure of self-protection in the defense of the gains and rights which labor obtained in long years of struggle.

In view of the above considerations the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America places itself on record and in line with the other international unions who launched the Committee for Industrial Organization. This Committee will carry on educational activity among the workers in the unorganized mass production industries and will endeavor to render all possible assistance to them in their efforts to organize into strong, powerful unions of the American Federation of Labor.

Must Answer Employers

The violent attack recently made by organized employers' groups, such as the National Association of Manufacturers and affiliates, upon the economic and legislative policies put into effect since the Roosevelt Administration came into office and which have been largely responsible for the partial recovery which has been achieved, lends particular timeliness to the determination of the General Executive Board to do everything possible to further organizing activity of labor in all industries.

The future of the nation is indissolubly bound up with the future of labor. Labor must face, meet and answer the challenge thrown to it. At no time was it more necessary than today that labor be powerfully organized and that its economic organization be made all-inclusive, cohesive, strong and alert.

Statement by the GENERAL EXECUTIVE BOARD of the

INTERNATIONAL

LADIES' GARMENT WORKERS' UNION

The International Ladies Garment Workers' Union has always favored the industrial form of organization, particularly for the unorganized workers in the mass production industries, as the more effective, practical and modern method of organization. We have, therefore, welcomed the formation of the Committee for Industrial Organization within the American Federation of Labor for the objectives as outlined by the Committee, as follows:

"It is the purpose of the Committee to encourage and promote organization of the workers in the mass production and unorganized industries of the Nation and affiliation with the American Federation of Labor. Its functions will be educational and advisory and the Committee and its representatives will cooperate for the recognition and acceptance of modern collective bargaining in such industries."

It is our conviction that the American Federation of Labor will ultimately have to adopt this method of organization for the mass production industries. The millions of workers in American industry who are unorganized should not be left outside the fold of the organized labor movement because of a form or organization unsuited to their industrial environment. Without the protection of trade unions, these millions are today not only compelled themselves to live below the level of a decent existence, but by the very fact that they are forced to accept inferior standards of work and livelihood, they are pulling down the general standard of working conditions in our country.

New Members Will Be Bulwarks of Defense

If we neglect to organize them into the bona fide American labor movement, there is imminent danger that these masses of workers will either be forced into company unions or will be lured by other subversive or dual movements. This duty to bring these millions of workers in the basic mass production industries into the ranks of the organized labor movement becomes all the more imperative at this hour when the selfish predatory forces of industry and high finance and all other elements of reaction have resumed their attacks upon all social and labor legislation and are intent upon wiping out every economic gain and advantage secured by the workers in the last few years.

Every new industry added to our movement will become a new bulwark of defense against our common enemies whose goal is the ultimate destruction of the labor movement.

Favoring as we do a change in the method of organization in the mass production industries, and realizing that greater and more effective results could be achieved only by joint action, we have joined the Committee for Industrial Organization and our Union will give this Committee every support, as long as it adheres to the purposes originally outlined by it. Our International Union, which more than any other union has fought dual unionism and opposition within its own midst, would strenuously oppose any movement which has for its purpose to act as an opposition to the American Federation of Labor or to promote any dualism. We are convinced, nevertheless, that it is the inherent right of our Union, as well as of any other union affiliated with the A. F. of L., to advocate individually or jointly a change in organizing methods or in the form of organization and to promote our advocacy in a democratic, fraternal manner, and at the same time preserve the unity of forces in the American labor movement.

REPLY OF

JOHN L. LEWIS

President, United Mine Workers, to Mr. William Green

December 7, 1935.

Mr. Charles P. Howard, Secretary of the Committee for Industrial Organization, and other members of the Committee have replied categorically and conclusively to the statements contained in your public letter. I associate myself with their replies.

Now of other things: your official burdens are great. I would not increase them. I do not covet your office, in proof, I submit the record of years of support of your personal and official fortunes. It is bruited about, however, that your private sympathies and individual inclinations lie with the group espousing the industrial type of organization, while your official actions and public utterances will be in support of their adversaries. Such a policy is vulnerable to criticism and will hardly suffice to protect you against attacks that may ensue from advocates of the craft philosophy. They may feel rightfully that more is due them than perfunctory support.

Why not return to your father's house? You will be welcome. If you care to dissociate yourself from your present position, the

Committee for Industrial Organization will be happy to make you its Chairman in my stead. The honorarium will be equal to that you now receive. The position would be as permanent as the one you occupy. You would have the satisfaction of supporting a cause in which you believe inherently, and of contributing your fine abilities to the achievement of an enlarged opportunity for the nation's workers.